



Five College Center for World Languages

Published on LangMedia (<https://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu>)

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Conversation Partner Strategies

Getting a student to produce as much language as possible while staying as silent as possible oneself takes practice. Being receptive to what the student is saying silently invites the student to continue speaking. Smiling, nodding, and saying nothing all convey the same message to the student: “yes, you can do it, you’re doing fine, keep speaking.” In eliciting speech production, nothing is as effective as silence. The student will try to fill it and if the conversation is nodding but continues to be silent, the student will keep going. If the student stops, a simple “what else?” can get them going again.

Conversation Partner Strategies I (Arabic)

Note the demeanor of the conversation partner. She nods, smiles, says “ummmm” or “oooo” or “un-huh” and the student keeps on talking. She also gives the students a lot of time to think. She doesn’t rush them.

Conversation Partner Strategies II (Hindi)

Note the amount of time the student takes to respond. The students need time to think.

Conversation Partner Strategies III (Pashto)

The conversation partner wants more information, so he asks “what else do you see?” and the student continues.

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